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19 August 1963

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Jamming of VOA by the USSR and East European Satellites

1. The USSR began jamming VOA broadcasts in February, 1948. The jamming at first was merely an irritating hindrance, but from April 1949, the jamming became intense and seriously curtailed VOA's effectiveness. The USSR extended its jamming operations to VOA East European broadcasts shortly before the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. RFE programs were jammed by the USSR as soon as they began in 1949, and the satellites joined in the following year.

2. The USSR has stopped jamming VOA on only two occasions since 1948. Total suspension of jamming first occurred during Khrushchev's visit to the US in September 1959. VOA transmissions to the East European satellites, however, continued to be jammed. In a talk with US officials in Washington on 15 September 1959, Yuri Zhukov, then Chairman of the State Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, explained that relaxation of jamming by the USSR was an experiment to see whether VOA would cease pursuing the cold war. He expressed hope that if the USSR stopped its jamming of VOA, the US would halt anti-Soviet broadcasts.

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after Khrushchev's departure from the US, Moscow resumed jamming though on a very limited and selective scale. This policy continued until the U-2 incident and the abortive Paris summit meeting in May 1960. Thereafter, jamming became more intense but still selective. The Soviets did not try to jam VOA English language and popular music programs, apparently deciding that it was not worth the expense and effort. Yet the USSR did jam items considered particularly sensitive and offensive.

State Department review completed

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3. Total suspension of jamming by the USSR occurred for the second time on 19 June 1963, and has continued to the present. There had been a reduction in jamming since the week of 4 June. In addition, on 29 July the Rumanian Government suspended all jamming of VOA and RFE Rumanian language broadcasts and the USSR and the bloc countries stopped jamming of Western broadcasts to Rumania. Although Poland stopped its jamming in 1955, other bloc transmitters continued to interfere with short wave broadcasts to that country.

4. There are several explanations for the Soviet decision to stop jamming: First, the jamming operation is estimated to cost the USSR \$100 Million annually--funds which could be diverted into more worthwhile domestic programs. Second, recent VOA broadcasts have dealt extensively with such items as US racial troubles. The Soviets may have decided it was beneficial to let their people hear this news from the US itself. Third, the Soviets genuinely desire an atmosphere of detente with the West in order to deal as effectively as possible with pressing intra-bloc problems and Chinese rivalry in the international communist movement. This seems to be the most important reason for total suspension of jamming, occurring as it did almost immediately after the publication in the Soviet press of President Kennedy's American University speech of 10 June and the signing of the "hot-line" agreement shortly before.

5. Whether Moscow or Bucharest took the initiative to stop jamming in Rumania is unclear. In either case, the Rumanian motive probably was twofold. On the one hand, Bucharest wished to identify itself with and to support Moscow's policy of detente. It was one of the first satellites to sign the nuclear test ban treaty, sending to Washington for that purpose a higher ranking diplomat than any other East European government.

6. At the same time, given its avowed interest in expanding trade with the United States, the Rumanian regime undoubtedly saw the advantage to be derived from this and other gestures. On 7 August Bucharest proposed on a reciprocal basis an end to diplomatic travel restrictions and suggested raising the level of diplomatic representation between the two countries. In Washington on 8 August, Deputy Foreign Minister Malita indicated his country's willingness to send its State Planning Commission Chairman here to discuss its trade interests and ability to pay.

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7. In developing a jamming capability nationally-controlled transmitters were constructed in and around cities to block broadcasts on middle and low frequencies. To jam short-wave broadcasts effectively, transmitters were set up at distances outside the receiving country. Both involved a costly network of jamming systems comprising nearly 3,400 transmitters. Jamming of foreign broadcasts to any one satellite is a cooperative venture--jammers in the USSR, in adjoining satellites and in the host country are involved. Thus, for example, Soviet, Czechoslovak, Hungarian and Bulgarian transmitters were used along with Rumanian transmitters to jam broadcasts in Rumania. Jamming was considered 100% effective only in the bloc capitals and some of the larger cities in the USSR and the satellites. The Soviet Committee for State Security (KGB), like its predecessors and MGB and MVD, is thought responsible for direct jamming operations in the USSR and maintaining surveillance on the effectiveness of satellite jamming.

8. Among the explanations given over the years by the USSR for jamming VOA are the following:

- (a) VOA broadcasts contain untruths and fabrications about the USSR.
- (b) VOA broadcasts indulge in "meddling" in Soviet internal affairs and are designed to "overthrow Soviet power."
- (c) VOA unlawfully uses the Soviet broadcasting frequency of 173 kcs. Moscow claims it has been using this frequency since the early 1920's, and that it was legally assigned to her by the Copenhagen Frequency Plan adopted in the summer of 1948. Upon agreeing to this Plan, Moscow reserved the right "to take necessary technical measures to eliminate interference in the work of its stations." Moscow has repeatedly accused the US--not a participant in the Plan--of operating on 173 kcs. and has offered this as an excuse for intensive jamming.